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ABSTRACT

Independent schools (that is, nontraditional proprietary and nonprofit private colleges) that specialize in shorter term technical, vocational, and business curricula are doing a better job providing short-term vocational education than are traditional two- and four-year colleges that typically offer a wide variety of degrees. While traditional institutions provide both general long-term preparation and short-term skills, the time has come to recognize that independent schools have advantages that make them the last providers of short-term vocational education in this country. Included among these advantages are the following: (1) they manage to place more students in jobs of their fields of interest; (2) they have lower dropout rates; (3) they generally provide for more contact hours of instruction and for more hands-on learning; (4) while the independent schools may seem relatively costly when compared to other forms of education, their services may ultimately be more cost effective because of shorter instructional times and higher placement rates; and (5) since independent schools are market-driven, they are more accountable to employers than are traditional institutions. (MN)

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AICS SPECIAL REPORT

A FULL PARTNERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Then, in 1975, he was chosen as one of the Outstanding Young Men in America and was listed in the Who's Who in Kansas.

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Readers may recall "Reassessing Values in Postsecondary Education," a special report issued in 1977 by the Association of Independent Colleges and Schools. Called an "adversary view" by one reviewer, the premise of this paper was that independent schools */ should be considered an attractive alternative to colleges and universities when it comes to vocational education. Given subsequent events and assessments, our conclusion that nontraditional schools improve the balance in the nation's educational system by providing more certain job opportunities perhaps should have been less tentative.

In the previous report, it was argued that independent schools represented an option in an educational system which was becoming more pluralistic. It was held that nontraditional schools could do as well as the traditionals in certain categories of career training. The present view is that independent schools are doing and should continue to do a <u>better</u> job with short-term vocational education than the traditional institutions. Independent schools are no longer stand-in players but have a distinctive role which cannot be as competently assumed by others.

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*/ For purposes of this discussion, <u>independent</u> schools are nontraditional proprietary and nonprofit private colleges and schools which specialize in shorter-term technical, vocational, and business curricula. <u>Traditional</u> colleges are two-year junior or community colleges and four-year universities typically offering a wide variety of degrees; these institutions may be endowed or tax-supported.

In 1977 it was necessary to stipulate that independent schools were frequently greeted with some disdain. This still happens occasionally, but much has changed. Regrettably, the increasing parity of the two categories reflects doubts about the traditional institutions as well as the upward mobility of the nontraditionals.

Pinched federal and state economies and the downward slide in student readiness for profundities have affected the colleges more than the independent schools. Public disenchantment with higher education in general, a poor job market for many graduates, and faltering enrollments have added to the malaise.

Vocational education, however, is on the up side. Increasing mechanization in all fields means most jobs will become more complex and specialized and that education beyond the high school level will be needed to fill them. Young people with just a high school diploma will not be welcomed with open arms by employers. More people will have to plan for some kind of post-secondary education to qualify for good jobs.

The news for independent schools is also encouraging. Business Week recently proclaimed that nonacademic vocations are more widely accepted these days.(7) Enrollment patterns have shifted and vocational subjects are booming. Enrollments in business/office schools, for example, were up a whopping 28 percent between 1976 and 1978. Stronger accreditation standards, including financial safeguards, have produced greater respect among federal and

state agencies. Fortune Magazine calls proprietary schools the country's most overlooked resource.(5)

Others are in agreement that the function of nontraditional career-training schools is distinctive. In comparing roles of colleges and vocational schools, one author observed "Each camp has different, quite respectable missions and reasons to exist..."(13) He went on to say that "... traditionals tend to stampede into occupational formats when their academic missions are called into question...."

Goals served by institutions of higher education need to be re-examined. Few would argue that traditional institutions are not best equipped to develop general and disciplinary knowledge in students. In this setting, knowledge is often learned without a view to specific application. Such learning is not without its hazards, as noted by Benjamin A. Rogge, professor of political science at Wabash College, Crawfordsville, IN.(20) In what must have been one of the most delightful commencement addresses of 1980, Rogge stated:

> ...you are now leaving this place knowing more than when you entered it. That's it; that's all there is. Or I can put it this way, you have all the advantages of knowing over not knowing. Moreover, you now know how to go about knowing even more for the rest of your life; you may even know what it is that is worth knowing and what it is that isn't worth knowing...."

Nothing here should be interpreted to deny the need for many people to be ready to confront unique and serious problems being faced by society. Great value is properly assigned to knowledge which just might be available at the right time and place.

Developing the critical faculties of students is another goal which can be effectively served by colleges. This assumes that the traditional institutions will attract as students many persons of such mental superiority that they will be able to become solvers of complex and significant problems. The obligation of the college is to cultivate fully the mind and resources of each student admitted.

The goal of career education has been set by both traditional and independent institutions. Everyone has wanted to capitalize on career motivation. Liberal arts colleges are about as quick as the university professional schools to promise jobs. Degree-granting two-year colleges and independent schools have offered vocational education. Vocational education as defined here is for persons who want to quickly become productive and efficient in a job without many theoretical and philosophical frames of reference.

Students who desire to enter careers which require a degree or several years of preparation must look, for the most part, to the traditional institutions. Taxpayers have been willing to subsidize professional and other long-term programs -- recognizing that it would be the rare student who could afford tuition reflecting the actual costs of, for example, medical or legal training today. Colleges have been generally effective in garnering financial support from governments or private donors. The independent institutions have neither the resources nor the financial support for undertaking lengthy preparation programs.

In order to sharpen judgments as to who can best meet needs in relation to these goals of higher education, a set of principles are proposed for reference. They may not be all-inclusive and they may not be acceptable to everyone, but they are sure to have wide acceptance as expressing desires of many citizens and students. Discussion under each principle attempts to demonstrate that independent schools and colleges best serve the goal of providing effective short-term career education.

Principle I. Effective vocational education will result in graduates entering jobs for which they prepared. A large majority of students in postsecondary education are there to gain a career. "Nearly half of all undergraduates would drop out of college if they thought it was not helping their job chances, and more than a third would leave college immediately if they could get the same job now as after graduation," according to Arthur Levine, who reported findings from surveys of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (17)

Not all of the students who want a particular career will be successful in securing a job in their field. This is particularly true for graduates of traditional four-year colleges, for a degree is no longer the reliable ticket to a good job that it used to be. The Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U. S. Department of Labor has published a study which reveals that only 72 percent of recent graduates are working in jobs generally requiring a degree. Significantly, about half of those in jobs not requiring a degree were in clerical occupations. (22)

Disparity is growing between the availability of jobs requiring a degree and the number of college graduates being produced. In 1980, a surplus of college graduates estimated at 3.8 million were already in the labor force, either unemployed or employed in jobs that did not require their level of education. A surplus of between two and three million degree graduates are expected to enter the labor force during the 1980s.(21)

Some college majors have a particularly unfavorable balance between the number of graduates and the number of available jobs in the desired field. A study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed that job opportunities are actually declining in the degree fields of history, secondary education, agriculture, and in some college teaching subjects.(24)

The DOL sponsored a survey to compile data on what percentage of persons graduating in a field in 1977 were working in that field in jobs generally requiring a degree. The Bureau of Labor Statistics recently published the results of that study, including the following:(22)

Accounting	89%
Agriculture and Natural Resources	66%
Art	45%
Biological Sciences	70%
Business and Management	72%
Chemistry	85%
Communications	69%
Economics	75%
Education	84%
Engineering	88%
English	72%
History	54%
Home Economics	61%
Mathematics	72%

Nursing	92%
Physical Education	81%
Political Science	65%
Psychology	53%
Sociology	48%

It should be noted that some of these percentages are as low as they are because graduates in some fields tend to attend graduate schools disproportionately.

Only about half of the number of persons who attend a traditional college complete a program of study. While the learning received may prove helpful in securing and keeping a job, this cannot be taken for granted.(20) Even when degree-holders drop their aspiration levels to employment which does not require a degree, they may encounter the response that they are "over-qualified." Employers may resist hiring applicants considered over-qualified for fear that they will be come discontented or that they will leave as soon as something better comes along.

Independent schools have been pre-eminent in relating their instruction and services to their students' securing wanted jobs. Studies have shown that percentages ranging from 80 to 90 percent of independent school graduates desiring to work are employed in their field of interest.(15) The high rate of job success is undoubtedly a result in part of the effectiveness of independent schools' placement services.

Placement is more important, apparently, to independent schools than to the traditional institutions. Early emphasis on this service was stimulated in some schools by the Veterans

Administration. In order to have VA approval for student support, a school must prove that at least 50% of the graduates get the jobs they were trained for.[19]

Freeman observed that placement services are among the special offerings of independent institutions.[15] The "placement spirit" is perhaps equally important. Not only do the school administrators try to identify possible job openings, but they are also intent on maintaining liaison with potential employers. The school is likely to be able to improve its students' job-seeking skills as the result of feedback from employment interviews. In acquiring the capacity for matching graduates to available jobs, the school can develop a close and trusting relationship with employers.

The key to the future placement of an institution's graduates in desired careers is highly dependent on offering training closely correlated to employment demands. When times are good, students can be blase about educational experiences beyond high school. When the economy is in a slump and jobs are hard to find, a postsecondary educational investment becomes a much more serious matter. Independent schools are fortunately positioned in being able to provide short-term vocational education in some of the areas of greatest need.

The white collar jobs of the future will represent the greatest number of openings. Clerical jobs alone will account for a million-and-a-half jobs. Jobs in the fastest growing

areas are insurance claims representatives, secretaries, collection workers, bank clerks, and receptionists.(24)

Service occupations, which include jobs in cleaning, health, personal, and protective services, are expected to be the fastest growing group of occupations during the 1980s. This group, however, represents fewer jobs than the white collar or blue collar groups.

Blue collar jobs will be available in the 1980s. Because of new production methods, the employment growth will be limited to unskilled and semiskilled operative and laborer occupations. There will be a continuing demand for skilled craft workers, repairers, and mechanics.(24)

Many business/office schools are preparing their students for careers related to computers. Advances in technology and the widespread use of computers in all industries are responsible for a 50 percent increase in computer-related jobs during the past decade while the rate of growth for all occupations was only 20 percent. The computer occupations--including data processors, system analysts, operators, and repair and maintenance technicians--are reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics to be among the 10 fastest-growing occupations projected for the 1980s.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics also lists 20 careers which will show the most rapid employment growth in the next decade. Of those named, 14 require vocational training. Among those are the following: paralegal assistant, office machine mechanic,

food preparation and service workers, employment interviewers, and tax preparers.

It is clear that many of the jobs that will be available are in offices. Office employment has increased steadily over the past 20 years, and this trend is expected to continue through 1990. There are presently over 400,000 unfilled, full-time permanent general clerk and clerk-typist jobs available in this country.(23)

In the past, office jobs were often thought of as routine and repetitive. Today's office technology is changing this. Many routine functions can now be handled mechanically, and clerical personnel have greater opportunities for involvement in other kinds of activities. Calling for more planning, more independent work, and greater contributions to the vital concerns of the company, office jobs are going to provide more challenges, require greater skills, and command better pay. With additional training and incentive, it is not uncommon for office employees to advance into the executive levels of business.

Principle II. Effective vocational education will retain students until they are ready for the job for which they prepared. The drop-out rate of a school or a grouping of institutions indicates how well the program of study or training is holding the students' attention and is meeting their needs. When an individual drops out of an educational program prior to becoming qualified for a desired job, he or she has probably wasted considerable time and financial investment. The holding power

of an institution is, then, an important aspect of its effectiveness.

Over 75 percent of high school students say that they are bound for a four-year college, although only 45 percent actually enter. Of these, only about a half complete a degree. The gap between intention and completion represents unrealistic goal-setting at best. Perhaps high school counselors are in many instances encouraging faulty planning--with respect to student interest and capabilities and constraints within the job market.

A study conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics in 1978 indicated that close to 70 percent of independent school students either completed their programs of study or left before completion in order to accept a position in the desired field. Only 55 percent of the public vocational school students were completers or leavers. This suggests that approximately 30 percent of independent school students drop out of programs before they are "employable," as compared to about 45 percent of public vocational school students.[15]

In an earlier study for the Inner City Fund, Inc., Erikson found a completion rate among proprietary schools that approached 90 percent.[9] Factors cited as generating such high retention included individual attention to students, faculty accountability, performance feedback from students, and motivational strategies to assist slow learners and retrieve drop-outs.

The drop-out rate of independent schools, which is much lower than that of the traditional institutions, reflects

recruitment practices and relevance of programs. A reciprocal relationship should properly be expected between the objectives of an educational institution's programs and the kind of students admitted. Universities intend to offer programs which, if students are to benefit maximally, require above average mental abilities. The lasting effects of advanced disciplinary study seem to be heavily dependent on the intellectual ability of the students. One of the reasons for the melancholia in higher education today is faculty disillusionment with the qualities of students recruited for their universities.

Principled student selection requires that entrants be able to meet their objectives if they successfully complete a program of study. Young people should be recruited and prepared for work that is abundant. Traditional colleges do not give the same dedication to job placement that independent schools do.

Today more job seekers are realizing they have to look at schools that have close and established relationships with the marketplace. Seventy-seven percent of indpendent school students participating in a survey stated that they selected schools because they had favorable placement records. Further, according to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, 79 percent of the students in independent schools reported they planned to look for work in a field related to their training after graduation, as compared to 69 percent of students in public vocational schools. Ninety-four percent of those were seeking a diploma, license or certificate as a result of their program, as compared to 86 percent of public school students. (15)

Recruitment in independent schools is aimed at selecting students who know what they want from their education. Since in most instances the number of options is small, in contrast to traditional colleges, self-selection of a program of study is an important factor. The emphasis is to attract individuals who desire to work at a particular job and who want to be intensively prepared to be placed in that position. Motivation of the students selected for admission has been the key to the placement success of the independent schools.

Principle III. Effective vocational education will provide relevant, superior instruction. No category of institutions, traditional or nontraditional, has cornered the market on excellent instruction. There are nonetheless some indicators related to several issues which appear to give the edge to independent schools.

The independent schools are aggressive in their efforts to produce an individual capable of securing and holding a job when he or she enters the marketplace. This is seen in a student-instructor ratio in classes which is smaller than that found among colleges and universities, allowing more individual attention to students.(2) Many more contact hours of instruction are typically provided in an independent school than are included in the traditional semester schedule.(15) "Hands-on" learning found in most independent schools is more likely than didactic instruction to transfer to job performance.

A particular strength of the indpendent school curriculum is the relevance of its training to the objective of entering a career field. The uncertain economy ahead is leading manufacturers to hire people with specific skills they can use immediately. Independent colleges follow occupational trends closely. Resources such as the Occupational Outlook Handbook, published by the Department of Labor, are used in order to anticipate where growing market demand will exist. What is learned about employers' needs for job-holding skills is likely to shape a school's curriculum and its instruction.

To remain competitive, independent schools frequently modify their curricula to adjust to shifting job markets. Programs are allowed to wax and wane with new technology and job requirements.

Students less gifted or of more average abilities find programs in independent schools which are suited to their needs. Wilms concluded that proprietary schools can serve high school and college drop-outs and minorities who were able students but for a variety of reasons were not able to function efficiently in a traditional institution.(27)

By 1985, the traditional college age population (18-24) will include a higher proportion of black and Hispanic youth. More college age women than men are now enrolling in postsecondary education. Short-term, job-oriented study programs can serve many women and minorities more effectively and at more reasonable financial investment than the universities. The recent Carnegie

Council report indicates that 67 percent of students cite the ability to get a better job as an "essential purpose of their education."(17)

Graduates who will be ready to become immediately productive must be trained using state-of-the-art equipment. In vocational education, as noted in Business Week, the qualifications of the instructor and the vintage of equipment used are more important than the school's location or physical layout.(25) In order to respond to the need for job skills, independent schools have moved more quickly than others to provide a variety of up-to-date word-processing and computing equipment for training their students.

Since they do not receive tax support, independent schools are perhaps more interested in productivity and the workings of the free enterprise system. Students in such institutions are more likely than others to take on the attitudes and values which will be found among employers. The AIR study previously cited concluded that the profit motive in a school had a positive influence on their quality and effectiveness.

In another study, the profit motive was also found to be consistent with student interest in gainful employment. It was concluded that the profit motive creates innovation, flexibility, and effectiveness in both administrative and educational quality.(9)

Principle IV. Vocational education is best which is cost-effective. The costs of all varieties of postsecondary education are high and are increasing rapidly. Newsweek reported that

tuition has been galloping ahead of inflation since 1980 and will probably continue to do so. Many traditional colleges kept their tuition artificially low in the 1970s by deferring maintenance and skimping on faculty salaries. According to one estimate reported by the magazine, at least 25 percent of all college facilities now need repair or replacement. State and college officials expect state appropriations to lag for the next three years, and as a result, they believe, tuition will continue to rise.(8)

The independent school is relatively costly, second in tuition only to private four-year colleges and universities. For the 1979-80 academic year, the proprietary school averaged $2,321 per year for tuition and fees while the private four-year institution charged $2,923. The private two-year institutions charged less, as did all public institutions. There was less variation in room and board costs. A summary of costs is provided, as follows:(6)

	Tuition/Fees	Room/Board
Four-year, private	$2,923	$1,629
Four-year, public	680	1,550
Two-year, private	2,043	1,577
Two-year, public	389	1,392
Proprietary	2,321	1,700

To apply the principle of cost-effectiveness, it is not enough to compare just the costs of attending the institution. It is also important to ascertain whether or not the institution

with the lower tuition can provide the student with an equal opportunity to be placed in a job.

Students can enroll in a 40-week business school program, for example, master a specialized curriculum, and move directly into the job market. The job skill and the early entry into the job market provide the student more income at an earlier time than that afforded the student in a traditional college. While the business college may be higher in costs per year, these factors can make the costs favorable when compared to the benefits and expenses of other educational programs.

Costly and time-consuming traditional college programs may not be appropriate or worth the financial sacrifice for many students. Earnings, for example, are not as closely associated with the years in college as they used to be. Workers with college degrees earned 50 percent more than high school graduates during an average week in 1980, but the degree was worth even more in 1975.(7) The proportion of higher salaries for degree graduates of college over nontraditional forms of postsecondary education is dropping steadily as increased emphasis is placed on technological skills.

Principle V. Effective vocational education will be fully accountable. While no one would deny the student the opportunity to learn what and where he wishes to, the choice may prove disappointing to the learner if only one of five jobs in the future will require a degree. Public institutions are extremely costly to taxpayers--if not the students--for tuition pays, on the

national average, only 12 percent of the costs of operating state-supported four-year colleges. Colleges are not placing students nearly as well as the independent schools, with a resulting economic loss.

Erikson found that independent schools spend most of their budgets on qualified faculty, program revisions, and student recruitment. His study also showed that placement of graduates was not a high-cost item for these schools because once their reputations were established employers habitually contacted them for trained manpower. It was concluded that proprietary schools are more accountable to employers than traditional institutions and are clearer about their educational missions.(9)

Independent schools must meet the needs of students and employers because they are market-driven. Not all schools can or should be market-driven, for education is not a notably profitable activity. But some schools continue to turn out graduates for whom there are no jobs because there is no built-in mechanism to cut off a program or to modify it to save dollars--not to speak of the questionable ethics of producing students who are poorly directed or ill-equipped to gain and hold jobs.

At times, representatives of regulatory agencies indicate in no uncertain terms that a conflict is perceived between profit-making and quality in education. It is important that all educational institutions be accountable. Governments and taxpayers should be vitally concerned with the policies and practices of institutions they subsidize. The welfare of the

student should be the primary consideration, and the student should not be penalized because regulations imposed on the type of school he chooses to attend are not imposed on others.

Conclusions

Values in postsecondary education can properly be attached to knowledge and skills which are general in nature, long-term vocational preparation, and short-term job skills. Each emphasis represents cultural needs and the common good; traditional and nontraditional institutions have distinct contributions to make. That they overlap is obvious and purposeful. The time has come, however, when it is recognized that indpendent schools have advantages making them the logical providers of short-term vocational education in this country.

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